



Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

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Everybody Pitched In to Keep Veterans Center at Full Operation During Storm Disaster

Staff and families slept at Hanson facility

(HANSON, KY, Feb. 11, 2009) Even as the power went down and stayed down throughout Hopkins County two weeks ago, service to the 120 veterans at Western Kentucky Veterans Center barely hiccuped.

The moment power failed at 6:20 a.m. on January 27, the generators at WKVC kicked on. For more than nine days, maintenance staff stayed at the facility around the clock to keep the generators going until the power returned on February 5.

Staff in the nursing, dietary and housekeeping departments stayed past their own shifts to ensure full coverage when employees could not get to work because of blocked roads.

Gloria Willis, a Nurse Aide State Registered, is to be commended for not letting a few downed trees keep her away, determinedly walking to work to cover her shift.

"I can't praise our staff enough for all they did during this emergency," said Ken Lucas, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA), which operates the nursing home. "But as proud as I am, I'm not surprised. This is a perfect example of the dedication to superb service to veterans that is shown by all our employees."

Staff throughout the facility pitched in wherever they were needed, helping to prepare and serve meals, clean laundry and perform other tasks not part of their regular jobs. KDVA staff from the Frankfort headquarters and from Thomson-Hood Veterans Center in Wilmore also traveled west to help provide critical nursing, food, laundry and housekeeping services.

Many employees had lost power at their homes, so WKVC opened its doors to those families, enabling spouses and children to sleep, bathe and get meals at the facility during the emergency.

“The residents really didn’t see any changes in the delivery of care except maybe eating on paper plates,” WKVC Administrator Lori Hill said. “We pride ourselves on the fact that the residents were very secure, warm and well taken care of and didn’t have to experience the full effects of the ice storm.”

The emergency gave residents an opportunity to reflect on their memories of the Blizzard of 1978 and other bad storms, and tell those stories while basking in the extra attention they received from employees’ children and other family members staying there.

“Teamwork was what got everyone through this,” Hill said.